

forming a non-woven metallic mat by placing a first layer of metallic fibers on top of a second layer of metallic fibers, wherein said metallic fibers in said first layer are of a different size than said metallic fibers of said second layer;

heat treating the non-woven metallic mat having a plurality of metallic fibers so as to form a plurality of sinter bonds among said plurality of metallic fibers;

creating a filter element having said non-woven, metallic mat;

pleating said filter element, said pleating causing at least one of said plurality of sinter bonds to be damaged;

fixedly forming said filter element into a filter assembly having a desired shape; and

repairing said at least one damaged sinter bond by heat treating said filter element after said filter element has been fixedly formed into said filter assembly.

41. (Amended) A method of manufacturing a metallic filter for filtering a fluid, the method comprising:

forming a non-woven metallic mat by placing a first layer of metallic fibers on top of a second layer of metallic fibers, wherein said metallic fibers in said first layer are of a different size than said metallic fibers of said second layer;

heat treating the non-woven metallic mat having a plurality of metallic fibers so as to form a plurality of sinter bonds among said plurality of metallic fibers;

creating a filter element having said non-woven, metallic mat and a first metallic support screen;

pleating said filter element;

fixedly forming said filter element into a filter assembly having a desired shape; and

heat treating said filter element after said filter element has been fixedly formed into said filter assembly so as to bond said filter element to said metallic support screen.

49. (Added) The method according to claim 33, wherein said metallic fibers in said first layer and said second layer are of a different size within said first layer and said second layer.

50. (Added) The method according to claim 41, wherein said metallic fibers in said first layer and said second layer are of a different size within said first layer and said second layer.